



“Bringing Harm to Themselves and Their Families”: What “ex-gay therapies” really do to people

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The dangerous scam of “ex-gay therapies” has been exposed time and time again. *The San Francisco Chronicle* did so in a March 2003 [article](#):

Report: ‘Ex-gay’ therapy claims deceptive

The Conservative Christian organizations that are increasingly targeting teenagers and young people with “ex-gay” conferences and therapy are deceiving parents, teens and the public about the effectiveness of their efforts, according to a report released Thursday by a gay rights organization.

The report, “Youth in the Crosshairs: The Third Wave of Ex-Gay Activism,” claims that organizations working to help people overcome same-sex attraction could be sued because they cause harm instead of accomplishing what they promise.

“There’s no evidence that conversion therapy actually works, but there’s a growing body of evidence that it can be extremely harmful and unethical,” said Jason Cianciotto, a study author and director of research for the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force in New York, the organization releasing the report.



Even newspapers in less than gay-friendly states have run stories acknowledging the fraud of “ex-gay therapies” and that every – every – medical and mental health association in America renounces them:

[*Reparative therapy unnecessarily tampers with the mind*](#)

Saturday, July 01, 2006

In response to Harlow J. Keith’s June 23 letter, which addressed a June 11 article on the ex-gay ministry Exodus International, I address a couple of Keith’s misconceptions regarding homosexuality, reparative therapy and the “only way out” Exodus International and the evangelical Christian community portray.

Reparative therapy, the psychotherapeutic process pioneered by Joseph Nicolosi and Charles Socarides, is widely condemned by the vast majority of mental health professionals, including the American Psychiatric Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Medical Association, the American Psychological Association and the American Counseling Association. In addition, the National Association of School Psychologists, the National Association of Social Workers and the Royal College of Nursing also have renounced it. ...

The supposed need for reparative therapy derives solely from this assumption, that homosexuality is a mental illness and, therefore, in need of treatment. The fact that this assumption is based on spiritual-scriptural interpretation, rather than on scientific research and evidence, is apparent in that most reparative-therapy practitioners and centers are financially backed and supported by conservative Christian transformational ministries. They maintain that homosexuality is a socially destructive and undesirable chosen behavior, and that change is necessary and possible. Despite contradictions with current mainstream research results, reparative-therapy supporters continue to use biased research to purport this therapy to be an effective and safe alternative to an unhappy lifestyle.

Reparative therapy is, in short, a tampering and manipulation of the mind and conscience, the psychological well-being of a human being, something that we as humans do not have the right to tamper with. It is interesting and peculiar that this segment of the Christian community, which claims confidence in the power of prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit, would stoop to and participate in such medically unsound, potentially psychologically harmful techniques simply to satisfy their own egos and scriptural understanding. ...

And now, the head of the nation's largest "ex-gay ministry" has also exposed the deception in a June 18, 2007 *Los Angeles Times* [article](#):

Alan Chambers directs Exodus International, widely described as the nation's largest ex-gay ministry. But when he addresses the group's Freedom Conference at Concordia University in Irvine this month, Chambers won't celebrate successful "ex-gays."

Truth is, he's not sure he's ever met one.

With years of therapy, Chambers says, he has mostly conquered his own attraction to men... [but] he still struggles at times with homosexual temptation. "By no means would we ever say change can be sudden or complete," Chambers said.

After "years of therapy" – that's *very expensive* therapy from unlicensed religious "counselors" or renegade psychologists (the American Psychological Association is currently [investigating](#) "ex-gay therapies") – Mr. Chambers is still turned on by other men.

On July 28, 2004, *Los Angeles Times* writer Steve Lopez did a background story on Exodus International:

The Florida-based group was inspired nearly 30 years ago in Anaheim by charismatic Christian leaders who declared homosexuality a sin. Just one problem. [The] two men who helped get the movement started were counseling gays to go straight when, lo and behold, they fell in love with each other. ... The two men dumped their wives, abandoned Exodus, and wore each other's wedding bands. ...

Acknowledging and accepting one's homosexuality are major steps toward mental health and living an honest life of self-respect. Denying one's sexual orientation leads to a disingenuous life of repression, [witness](#) the executive director of Love in Action, another "ex-gay" ministry: "Rev. John Smid...is married to a woman and claims to have left behind 'the homosexual lifestyle,' *if not same-sex attractions*" [italics added].

Psychologist [Jeffry G. Ford](#) was once the executive director of Outpost, an "ex-gay" ministry in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He spent many years as a national speaker for Exodus International. His firsthand accounts of the "ex-gay" sham and the damage reparative, conversion and aversion therapies do have been published in peer-reviewed scientific journals. His [seminal study](#) "Healing Homosexuals: A Psychologist's Journey Through the Ex-Gay Movement and the Pseudo-Science of Reparative Therapy" appeared in *The Journal of Gay and Lesbian Psychotherapy*.

In short, “ex-gay therapies” cause shame, isolation, physical and psychological harm. And that’s *exactly* what a former co-founder and a former president of Exodus International just acknowledged:

[Former leaders of ex-gay ministry apologize for “bringing harm” and causing shame](#)

June 28, 2007

Three former leaders of a ministry that counsels gays to change their sexual orientation apologized, saying although they acted sincerely, their message had caused isolation, shame and fear.

The former leaders of the interdenominational Christian organization Exodus International said Wednesday they had become disillusioned with promoting gay conversion.

“Some who heard our message were compelled to try to change an integral part of themselves, bringing harm to themselves and their families,” the three said in a statement released outside the Los Angeles Gay & Lesbian Center.

The statement was from former Exodus co-founder Michael Bussee, who left the group in 1979, Jeremy Marks, former president of Exodus International Europe, and Darlene Bogle, the founder of Paraklete Ministries, an Exodus referral agency.

As *The Los Angeles Times* [reported](#), “All three [Bussee, Marks, Bogle] said they had known people who had tried to change their sexual orientation with the help of the group but had failed, often becoming depressed or even suicidal as a result.

But “ex-gay therapies” still continue. Their underlying precept is that homosexuality is a mental illness which can be “cured”: the profit incentive in misdiagnosis.

Aside from current scientific, medical and genetic research that refutes the “mental illness” claim, consider this *irrefutable* fact of history: homosexuals have existed as long as human beings have. From ancient Greece and Rome, to the Christian saints of the Middle Ages who left a considerable body of love poetry dedicated to their partners, from prehistoric rock paintings left by the San people in modern day Zimbabwe to Native American *berdache* who were venerated for their “Two-Spirit” orientation, homosexuals have always been present. One would naturally conclude, therefore, that homosexuality is part of “God’s plan” and the specific nature Divinity ordained for some individuals throughout human history.

But “ex-gay” proponents claim that God goofed when making all those homosexuals: a Divine error *they* can correct. Is that the height of hubris and blasphemy, or what?

The self-righteous with a hate-filled pro-discrimination agenda have always interpreted “God’s” will and cherry-picked the Bible to support their own sinister purposes. The Noah story was what bible-thumping Christian bigots used to justify slavery, as Jon Meacham pointed out in *The American Gospel*:

Pro-slavery advocates had ... biblical ammunition. The central text was Genesis 9:25-27, a [post-flood] bizarre episode involving a drunk Noah and his grandson. ... [After some heavy drinking] the old man passed out in his tent, naked, only to be discovered by Ham, who told his brothers of it. ... Once he awoke, Noah was furious to learn Ham had seen him [naked], and cried “Cursed be Canaan [a son of Ham]; a slave of slaves shall he be to his brothers.” A tradition developed that the “sons of Ham” were dark-skinned, and thus was born one of the roots of the biblical defense of slavery. In the New Testament, Saint Paul’s admonition for slaves to obey their masters were singled out as somehow having more force than the whole weight of the Gospels...

The Bible decrees many things, including the stoning to death of non-virgin brides and people

who wear clothes made of two different threads, and keeping women “in their place” as Saint Paul so clearly stated in First Timothy: “suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.”

But you don't hear the Bible-thumpers calling for the murder of non-virgin brides, the wearers (or manufacturers) of cotton-polyester clothing, or for women to be silent and subservient. But they are all calling for action against gays seeking equal *civil* rights. Sadly, that includes many African-American clergy whose own history seems to have taught them nothing: “[Anti-gay forces in religious black community stray from the message of King.](#)”

The “ex-gay” movement is part of the [Christianist](#) agenda. [Dominionist](#) James Dobson's [Focus on the Family](#) runs its own program called Love Won Out. But inevitably, [Truth Wins Out](#) and exposes more lies, more deception and more truly bizarre “ex-gay therapies,” such as drinking large amounts of Gator-Aide (to increase masculinity) and those experienced by Rev. Mel White.

Who's Mel White? [A thorn in the side](#) of the “ex-gay” movement:

From the 1960s through the early 1990s, the Rev. Mel White played a behind-the-scenes role in the resurgence of evangelical Christianity. While pastoring several West Coast churches and working with national crusades like Youth for Christ, White produced films and ghostwrote books for a “who's who” of evangelical leaders, including the Revs. Billy Graham, Jerry Falwell, D. James Kennedy and Pat Robertson.

Unknown to his friends and colleagues, White was also a closeted gay man who was nearly driven to suicide after two decades of struggling to save his marriage – and, he believed, his soul – with “reparative therapies” including electric shock and exorcism.

As noted earlier, these “ex-gay therapies” have no scientific or medical basis. In fact, all mainstream scientific and medical associations *uniformly* denounce them. And, as CNN reported on June 27, 2007, the American public is increasingly cognizant of the scientific and medical *facts*:

[Poll majority: Gays' orientation can't change](#)

A majority of Americans believe that gays and lesbians could not change their sexual orientation even if they wanted to, according to results of a CNN/Opinion Research Corporation poll released Wednesday [June 26,2007].

It's the first time in a CNN poll the majority has held that belief regarding homosexuality.

Fifty-six percent of about 515 poll respondents said they do not believe sexual orientation can be changed. In 2001, 45 percent of those responding to a CNN/USA Today/Gallup poll held that belief. In 1998, according to a CNN/Time poll, the number was 36 percent.

“Ex-gay therapies” are nothing more than a Christianist expression of the theofascist dominionist agenda. No one or no organization makes [that](#) clearer than Peter LaBarbera and his grotesquely misnamed organization:

[Americans For Truth](#) is joining with two other national pro-family organizations that are working together to form a multi-state outreach this weekend, designed to confront “gay pride” parade participants with the truth that Jesus Christ can set them free from the sin of homosexuality.

“Gay pride” parades in Chicago, Atlanta and Columbus, Ohio, this weekend will receive the hopeful message.

“The truth is, homosexuality is nothing to be proud of,” said Americans For Truth president Peter

LaBarbera. "Christ has helped set free thousands of people from this destructive lifestyle ... and we hope that those who have not closed their minds to God's truth will ... open their hearts to the life-changing Gospel truth on its pages."

The Virginia-based Family Policy Network (FPN), in an alliance with Naperville, Illinois-based Americans for Truth and the Ohio-based Mission America, will fly airplane banners over so-called "gay pride" parades in Georgia, Illinois and Ohio this weekend that read, "JESUS CHRIST: WWW. HOPE FOR HOMOSEXUALS.COM." [link added]

The "Jesus" these [Christianist](#) groups refer to is the one *they* created in their own malevolent image. Their claim to be "pro-family" is also a blatant lie. They take every opportunity to denigrate, stigmatize, disenfranchise, and hurt gay and lesbian parents, their children and their families. As one of LaBarbera's most recent statements illustrates, their self-righteous bigotry knows no bounds:

A pro-family leader says the wife of Democratic presidential candidate John Edwards has sent a terrible message to young people. On Sunday, Elizabeth Edwards kicked off San Francisco's annual "homosexual pride" parade by voicing support for same-sex "marriage."

Mrs. Edwards voiced her stance ... while speaking to an influential Democratic organization in San Francisco the morning of the parade. "I don't know why someone else's marriage has anything to do with me," Edwards said. "I'm completely comfortable with gay marriage." ...

"A sad thing about what Elizabeth Edwards said is that she is a role model," says Peter LaBarbera of Americans for Truth Action. "And young children, for example, look up to what she says.

"The more these liberals talk about homosexual marriage being okay and [that there is] nothing wrong with it, the more they're teaching children that this terrible thing – the destruction of marriage, the radical redefinition of marriage to accommodate immoral behavior – is okay," he adds.

Mrs. Edwards made perfect sense: "I don't know why someone else's marriage has anything to do with me." But as usual LaBarbera's remarks advocated nothing but malignant hate and ignorance. Apparently the president of "Americans for Truth" missed [the real truth of America's future](#): "Young Americans [ages 17 to 29] are more likely than the general public to favor a government-run universal health care insurance system, an open-door policy on immigration *and the legalization of gay marriage*, according to a New York Times/CBS News/MTV poll" [italics added].

And it's not just those heathen secular humanist young people who are abandoning the dour dogma of fear-mongering fundamentalism. An October 6, 2006 *New York Times* [article](#) titled "Evangelicals Fear the Loss of Their Teenagers" noted that "evangelical Christian leaders are warning one another that their teenagers are abandoning the faith in droves."

The ranks of Bible-thumping, evangelical fundamentalists are dwindling, while dominionists such as LaBarbera continue to make fools of themselves.

As for "ex-gay therapies," *caveat emptor*. Enjoy those gallons of Gator-Aide and the electrodes attached to your genitals. And don't forget to pay the bill. The profit incentive in misdiagnosis includes bizarre – and expensive – "treatments."